



# TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
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STATEMENT

BY

SENATOR THE HONOURABLE DENNIS MOSES,

MINISTER OF FOREIGN AND CARICOM AFFAIRS

OF

THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

DURING THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE

73<sup>RD</sup> SESSION OF THE

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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General Assembly Hall  
United Nations Headquarters

**Madam President,**

I am honoured to address this eminent congress of nations seized with advancing the international agenda towards the realisation of international peace, sustainable development and the well-being of all humankind.

**On behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, I extend congratulations to you on your election as President of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly.**

As we continue to pursue gender equality across all borders and spheres of endeavour, your assumption to the seat of the Presidency of the General Assembly is further impetus for global rethinking and acceptance of female leadership, and toward strengthening the global pursuit of gender parity, empowerment and equality.

Allow me to express, further, the gratitude of the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago to your predecessor, His Excellency Miroslav Lajčák, whose leadership helped advance the efforts of the United Nations to undertake an ambitious task of system-wide reform. The reform agenda marks a new and emerging approach to multilateral institutionalism and presents an opportunity to transform the United Nations into a dynamic body capable of better responding to the needs and challenges reflecting the diversity of its membership.

**Madam President,**

This year's theme, "*Making the United Nations Relevant to All People: Global Leadership and Shared Responsibilities for Peaceful, Equitable and Sustainable Societies*", compels us to reflect on the nexus between the UN's ambitious and comprehensive reform agenda and our shared pursuit of a sustainable future for all.

The myriad multidimensional threats that litter the international development landscape threaten our efforts toward universal sustainable development, the eradication of extreme poverty, peace and security and the enjoyment of fundamental human rights by all.

The existential threat posed by unmitigated climate change and global temperature increase, the undeniable challenge of extreme poverty, violent extremism, gender-based violence, and the spread of new and infectious diseases is one that is best faced together, as Member States of the United Nations. As the bastion of international peace and security, human rights, sustainable development and the rule of law, the United Nations, as an institution, is compelled to adopt a shift in its approach to ensure adequate, effective and efficient responses to the challenges of our time. It is on this basis that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago reaffirms its support for the implementation of the Secretary-General's reform agenda, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

As we pursue the cost-savings and efficiencies associated with the reform agenda, however, it is imperative that we do not lose sight of the foundational principles, values and overarching objectives of this august institution. In this regard, I am reminded of the words of former UN Secretary-General, the late Kofi Annan. He reminded us that, even though the United Nations is an organisation of States, the Charter is written in the name of "*We the peoples*." Ultimately, this is the role of the United Nations: to serve the needs and hopes of people everywhere. **People must be at the centre of our common endeavour.**

Having recognised this infinite truth, Madam President, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, through wide consultation, developed a national development strategy, titled '*Vision 2030*'. This multidimensional and inclusive development policy places our people, our greatest resource, at the centre of our pursuit of the sustainable development goals.

If we are to truly ensure no one is left behind, it is imperative that we advance our efforts to ensure equitable access to opportunity and mobility for the most vulnerable. Those who have long been left behind must now be positioned to participate in society as equals.

By its very nature, the scope of the 2030 Agenda speaks to the wide range of issues that challenge global sustainable development. Notwithstanding the global relevance of these challenges, it is widely acknowledged that asymmetries exist with regard to the impact of external shocks on Small Island developing States (SIDS), such as Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean region.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago recognises the Samoa Pathway as an essential component in the catalogue of development frameworks to specifically guide in the sustainable development of SIDS. Accordingly, Trinidad and Tobago welcomes the San Pedro Declaration adopted at the Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting of SIDS in Belize, and looks forward to participating in the High Level Review Summit of the SAMOA Pathway in 2019. Moreover, Trinidad and Tobago takes this opportunity to reinforce the principle that SIDS continue to be a "special case" for sustainable development, given our complex and intricate challenges.

As we and our regional partners prioritise the unique threats to the development of our people, the 2030 Agenda provides an important guide in our efforts to ensure that none of our citizens are left behind.

In manifesting the intent of the Agenda, we have come to appreciate the importance of prioritising the wellbeing of all of our citizens. In this regard, Trinidad and Tobago and our CARICOM counterparts are taking action to address the threat that high incidences of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) poses to our region. These diseases ravage our human resources, burden our healthcare systems and undermine our development efforts.

Since the adoption of the Port of Spain Declaration on NCDs by CARICOM Heads of Government in 2007, and the landmark United Nations High-level Meeting on the prevention and control of NCDs in 2011, Trinidad and Tobago has implemented a number of strategies for controlling and reducing NCDs.

Our National Strategic Plan for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases 2017-2021 aims to harness the collective efforts of both the public and private sector in respect of NCD prevention and control.

In this regard, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago welcomes the adoption of the political declaration of the Third High-level Meeting on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases. We remain fully committed to addressing NCDs and to ensuring that it remains on the international agenda.

By raising the standard of living, improving the educational and healthcare systems, and providing equal access to opportunities, Trinidad and Tobago's Vision 2030 is actively pursuing the development of a resilient, equitable and healthy society that places all people at the nucleus of our sustainable development efforts.

However, **Madam President**, no challenge is more pressing than that of climate change. For small island developing States (SIDS) like Trinidad and Tobago, casting doubt on the scientific truth behind climate change only serves to distract and to delay the urgent and ambitious action that is needed to confront the existential threat posed by global temperature increase.

Earlier this year, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago deposited its instrument of ratification to the Paris Agreement, thus formalising its steadfast commitment to the principles and goals of the Agreement. As our national contribution to achieving the overarching objective of the Paris Agreement, Trinidad and Tobago has committed to reducing cumulative greenhouse gas emissions by 15 per cent from industry, power generation and the transport sector by the year 2030.

As a State Party, Trinidad and Tobago will be actively engaged in the negotiating process under the UNFCCC to operationalise the Paris Agreement on a scale that will result in achieving the long-term temperature goal, and further limit the increase in global temperatures to 1.5 degrees Celsius. It is also hoped that the operationalisation process will catalyse international cooperation on mitigation, adaptation and climate finance, to this end.

**Madam President,**

Our commitment to the Paris Agreement reflects Trinidad and Tobago's overall responsibility to support international efforts to tackle shared environmental challenges, which include climate change, ozone depletion, land degradation, loss of biodiversity, illegal trade of wildlife and the movement of hazardous wastes.

As a twin-island state, the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources is critically important to the development priorities of Trinidad and Tobago. However, Trinidad and Tobago is located in a region that is highly vulnerable to an unprecedented rate of loss of marine biodiversity and the impacts of unsustainable practices on the marine environment.

Therefore, we welcome the First Session of the Intergovernmental Conference to develop a legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago looks forward to participating in the future sessions of the intergovernmental conference in 2019 and 2020 to elaborate the text of the instrument, which will ensure the protection and sustainable management of the common heritage of mankind for the benefit of present and future generations.

**Madam President,**

One of the pressing challenges facing the region is the cessation of correspondent banking relations, and the labelling of countries in the CARICOM region as non-cooperative tax jurisdictions. This issue has severely destabilised the financial sectors of the region without due consideration to the financial, human and technical constraints confronting our Member States.

As a result, the region's efforts to bolster our economic stability and effectively engage in the global financial system effectively have been stymied to the detriment of our economic growth and progress. This has the potential to further erode the development gains achieved thus far. In this regard, Trinidad and Tobago joins with other CARICOM Member States in reiterating our commitment to ensuring compliance with globally accepted standards and calls on our international partners to engage constructively on this issue.

**Madam President,**

In our collective journey towards sustainable development, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is fully convinced that the United Nations Development System, for the foreseeable future, will remain a reliable partner to assist our country in its efforts to achieve the sustainable development goals, and our Vision 2030 National Development Strategy.

With this in mind, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago welcomes the Secretary-General's efforts to reposition the UN Development System to better support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway, including through the reinvigorated Resident Coordinator System. Trinidad and Tobago reiterates the importance of ensuring that the development system adopts a more responsive and flexible approach to its development assistance, based on national priorities and needs, while strengthening national ownership and leadership.

**Madam President,**

The United Nations has long recognised the interconnectedness between peace and development: a symbiotic relationship, where one cannot exist without the other. Ongoing conflicts across the world serve as stark reminders of the need to promote a positive, dynamic and participatory international peace and security architecture, that is hinged on the spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation between governments, international organizations, and civil society, and that is in compliance with international obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

The illegal trade in arms continues to affect the social and economic fabric of the Caribbean region, including Trinidad and Tobago. This is particularly applicable to the trade in small arms and light weapons, which is linked to other transnational organized crime, such as drug trafficking. It threatens the livelihood of our people, undermines the rule of law and challenges our efforts for a peaceful, equitable and sustainable country.

On the global level, Trinidad and Tobago fully subscribes to the object and purpose of the Arms Trade Treaty, which can be leveraged as a mechanism for reducing incidences of armed violence in the region. Thus, since 2010, Trinidad and Tobago has tabled the biennial resolution on "Women, Disarmament, Non-proliferation and arms control," which encourages women's participation in disarmament decision-making processes.

On the issue of denuclearization, Trinidad and Tobago holds the firm view that the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons constitutes a crime against humanity, and a violation of international law, including the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Therefore, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago remains robust in its support for the full and effective implementation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and is actively treating with the issue of signature and ratification.

**Madam President,**

Trinidad and Tobago has long recognised that international peace and security must be supported by a robust international legal system, including in respect of international criminal justice. Trinidad and Tobago, through the work of our former Prime Minister and President of Trinidad and Tobago, the late Arthur N.R. Robinson, was at the vanguard of efforts towards the establishment of the International Criminal Court two decades ago.

Trinidad and Tobago remains a fervent advocate of the Court, underscoring its importance and legitimacy in various fora. We stand resolute in our commitment to support the mandate of the ICC and promote the universality of the Rome Statute.

The delegation of Trinidad and Tobago wishes to make the point that, consistent with the principle of complementarity enshrined in the Rome Statute, the Court's jurisdiction is only invoked when States are unable or unwilling to prosecute those accused of committing the most serious crimes of concern to the international community.

In fact, the late Kofi Annan stated at the adoption of the Rome Statute that, and I quote: "*Gradually the world has come to realize that relying on each State or army to punish its own transgressors is not enough. When crimes are committed on such a scale we know that the State lacks either the power or the will to stop them.*"

Therefore, no individual or State that demonstrates full respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights should fear the ICC. Those who fail to cooperate with the Court are contributing to a culture of impunity that undermines the rule of law, but also denies justice to victims of heinous crimes.

**Madam President,**

Our best efforts to strengthen multilateral peace and security will surely fall short unless there is real and significant reform of the Security Council. While we welcome the continuation of the inter-governmental negotiations on Security Council reform, Trinidad and Tobago remains concerned that such discussions have not resulted in tangible progress towards a text-based negotiation. Trinidad and Tobago urges the international community to work collaboratively towards reforming the Security Council to better address current realities and challenges, including those faced by small island developing States, as well as to improve the effectiveness and credibility of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace and international security.

**Madam President,**

This year, the world has witnessed the unifying power of dialogue and understanding with the recent Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and the Unification of the Korean Peninsula between the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Trinidad and Tobago remains optimistic that this historic milestone will usher in a new era of peace, cooperation and the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.

Despite this positive development, in our own region, the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba continues to stand as the last vestige of the Cold War. In keeping with its commitment to the Charter of the United Nations, and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, which calls for no one to be left behind, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago reaffirms its unceasing call for the cessation of the economic, commercial financial embargo against Cuba, sooner rather than later.

**Madam President,**

At the heart of our sovereign nations, our cultures and our languages, lies an individual being, who, at the very core, seeks a life of purpose, happiness and the opportunity to live in peace and prosperity. The challenge of our time is to pursue and achieve a sustainable future for all in the face of burgeoning threats to our shared humanity, including but not limited to the threats posed by extreme poverty, rising inequality, climate change and protracted conflicts. Facing that challenge requires deepened partnerships, meaningful dialogue, and an appropriate review of established mechanisms and institutions that, if reformed, can exponentially improve our ability to transform lives globally.

**The Government of Trinidad and Tobago remains unequivocally committed to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to the achievement of the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We commit to continuing to work in good faith with this august body that has long stood as the cornerstone of multilateralism, in the face of unprecedented challenges and threats facing humanity, to ensure no one is left behind.**

I thank you, Madam President.